THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS

WRITERS GUIDELINES

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DIC ENTERPRISES, INC.

THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS

Writers Guidelines

Syndication

Let's take this from the top -- by finding out who you are.

1) You saw the GHOSTBUSTERS movie and liked it. In that case, welcome.

2) You saw the GHOSTBUSTERS movie and didn't like it. In which case . . . why are you here, bothering us?

3) You haven't seen GHOSTBUSTERS. So go rent it. It's tax deductible. You can even invite your friends over and they'll all think you're really a swell person for springing for the cassette -- and only you will know the seamy, sordid truth behind your motivations. If you like it, then welcome. If not, then see item #2 above. We really don't care what your friends thought of it, but bear in mind, we know where they live.

I trust we now understand one another, and can proceed.

* * *

This is THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS, a syndicated and ABC-TV animated series. Based on the Columbia Pictures movie of 1984 that was a major financial and critical success, THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS takes up where that original movie left off, with (to paraphrase Penn and Teller) four eccentric guys who have learned how to do some really cool stuff.

To wit: they find, zap, and remove ghosts.

All kinds of ghosts. Big ghosts. Small ghosts. New ghosts. Old ghosts. Ghosts that used to be people. Ghosts whose origins and descriptions fall between the cracks of the nether-world (which, incidentally, looks a lot like Orange County). Scary ghosts. Funny ghosts. Funny ghosts with a scary edge to them.

Included in this list is an assortment of other entities they encounter from time to time -- gremlins, goblins, specters, spirits, wraiths, shades, revenants, sprites, phantoms, phantasms, bogles, banshees, poltergeists, eidolons (go look it up, what do I look like, a dictionary?), visions, the occasional genius loci (NOT a genie -- no genie stories, or we'll go out of our way to publicly humiliate you), demons, Sandmen, Tooth Faeries gone mad (we're still thinking about that one), dybbuks, imps, incubi (ditto), free-floating nightmares, bogeys and boogymen and long-leggity beasties and things that go bump in the night.

All of which is a long way of saying that there are all kinds of ghosts we can bust. Their conditions, predilections, powers and interests vary wildly, and the more that stories can use those differences as starting-off points, the more varied and interesting our series will be.

You start by asking a question: what would happen if gremlins got loose in the New York Subway System? If a garbage dump suddenly became aware, possessed by a genius loci, a spirit of the place? If the spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future were still roaming around? If those ghosts you get on some TV channels turned out to be the real thing?

And so on.

You'll note that such creatures as vampires, werewolves, and the like have been omitted from the preceding list. There's a reason for this. We don't like 'em. They're old, and they're cliched, and besides, did you ever try to stuff one of those suckers into an ecto-containment unit? Nasty. Very.

In other words, the threat must be substantial, but the thing posing the threat must be sufficiently insubstantial to be busted -- zapped and put into containment.

Unless you've got one heck of a reason to the contrary.

We hope this has all begun to get you sufficiently confused. That's our job, and we're darned proud of it.

So . . . where should stories for THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS originate?

1) From an interesting angle on a ghost-type thingie.

2) From a new or otherwise interesting arena.

3) From a turn-around on traditional ghost stories.

4) From the personalities and characters of the four Ghostbusters.

Or any combination thereof.

* * *

Which brings me to the four Ghostbusters themselves. Now, attached to this handout, you'll find the character descriptions written up by Len Janson and Chuck Menville. They are very nice, and if you haven't already read them, you should do so now. Right now. Go on, we'll wait for you until you get back.

And remember, this <u>will</u> count for half your grade.

* * *

Oh, good. You're back. Just in time for some last minute clarifications. In keeping the four Ghostbusters separate and distinct in your story considerations, keep the following fine points and modifications in mind:

EGON would be the one to design a new device, as he designed the original Ghostbusting equipment; he's a theoretical physicist, two-and-a-half steps removed what we all agree upon is reality. But he would leave the actual construction to

RAY, who is the real fix-it of the team, good with his hands, who is able to interpret Egon's figures and facts and translate them into something physical. Together, once they have everything, they would usually rely on

PETER, the somewhat unpractical leader of the group, who manages to sail through life on a smile and an amazingly healthy self-image. His smooth-talking near-perpetual calm is the very personification of the phrase, "If you're not scared, you haven't truly grasped the situation yet." This is somewhat in contrast to

WINSTON, who is in many ways really the driver of the team, the pragmatic force who serves as the balance between these three rather eccentric guys. His feet are rooted solidly on the ground, whereas Egon's feet are in his head, Ray's feet tread silicon-chip pathways, and Peter's feet are two of his best features, and what're you doing for dinner tonight?

Or, to quote Harold Ramis, co-writer and one of the stars of GHOSTBUSTERS, "Each character has his own internal motivation and personal style. In essence, that translated into one character (PETER) being hipper and more verbal than the others -- more of a

huckster, the salesman of the team -- someone who is weak on the technical side and probably didn't do all that well in school, but is smart enough to have hooked up with guys more intelligent than he is. Then it's always useful to have a mechanic -- a nuts and bolts person -- honest, straight-ahead, enthusiastic. For EGON, we went for a human computer, someone who has no emotional life whatsoever, who only deals in facts and information -- a 'New Wave' Mr. Spock."

You get the idea.

As for GOZAR -- forget him. He's history. With such a wonderful wealth of possibilities, why monopolize the show with a running nasty? Now, a jogging nasty, that we'll consider.

WALTER PECK, a somewhat more corporeal nasty, is also out. For the same reasons. We never liked him anyway. Besides, he couldn't dance and he dressed funny.

Finally, there's SLIMER. Getting a handle on Slimer can be tricky. It can also ruin your suit, but that's another story. We do not see Slimer as the pet dog, a sort of green Scooby-Doo. Most certainly, anyone who saw him would not mistake him for a dog of any sort.

Handled properly, and <u>not</u> overused, Slimer can be an interesting character. He would live under the floorboards, coming out at a moment's notice. He would be affectionate one moment, off getting into trouble the next. Sliming young women's hats. You have to realize that Slimer is not entirely domesticated, and probably never will be. We work with Slimer all the time, and we're not entirely sure even <u>he</u> knows who, and

what, and why he is. I mean, he's a ghost living with people whose job it is to beat the stuffings out of ghosts.

Put simply, Slimer is a cat. He has all the traits of a cat -- sneaky, fun-loving, affectionate, aloof, guilt-invoking, lazy, self-possessed, manipulative, funny (especially when caught off-guard). If you've ever owned a cat, or known anyone who owns a cat, you'll understand Slimer. If not, go find someone and ask what it's like. Cat owners, like war veterans, love telling stories. Failing this, then forget about it, and do the sensible thing. Trust us.

Just be sure to always use Slimer judiciously (unless you've got a good reason), since he can easily steal (slime?) the show.

As far as locale goes, we're staying rooted in New York for nearly all of our stories. So all the oddball, twisted, bizarre elements of New York are there at your command, waiting to be used in stories. You have full access to, and our personal permission to run rampant over, the New York Subway System, the Empire State Building, the Lincoln Tunnel, the Brooklyn Bridge, subways and taxis and libraries and sewer systems, name it.

We doubt we can do any stories in New Jersey. No self-respecting ghost would be caught dead in New Jersey.

And now for a few final words on story, and humor . . . .

It would be very easy to keep coming up with the Invading Ghost Army of the Week scenarios, interdimensional journey stories, and apocalyptic visions. We know because we've already come up with most of them, and if you're going to play in those same well-trod fields, you'd better have one spiffy turn on the formula.

What we're most interested in are the more personal, specific stories -- stories that grow out of some element in a Ghostbuster's personality, background or history . . . that come out of asking a logical question of an illogical situation . . . that arise from a specific request for help that gets out of hand, or reveals something about our characters. We've even got a story or two where the Ghostbusters make a Terrible Mistake, and have to correct it. Our characters are flawed, and those flaws can make for some terrific stories. In addition to their strengths, which are considerable, each has a glitch, a weakness, a spot from which they can be blind-sided. They have family members, friends, rivals, enemies in high places -- and the whole supernatural world generally annoyed at them.

What I'm saying is simply this. Every writer I've ever met has said, "If only there was a show where I could really cut loose and fly, where I didn't have to meet the requirements of toy companies, where I could build on character and plot and incident. Boy, could I show them some story-telling!"

Well, this is your chance. The field's wide open. We're open to just about everything except larceny. There are no toy companies setting quotas of toys or battles on this show. The only two people to have input into the series outside of this office are Michael Gross and Joe Medjuck from Columbia Pictures, where they were associate producers on the GHOSTBUSTERS movie -- and they are absolutely terrific. They honest-to-god <u>understand</u> story. Their comments and suggestions have been absolutely right-on. You give us a good, original story, and you'll be backed all the way.

Stretch a little. Push the envelope back, and give us the best you can.

Now . . . humor.

As you've probably noticed from the tone of these Guidelines (which was intentionally written in smart-mouth GB terms), this series is not going to, and cannot take itself too seriously. Although there will always be a fair amount of action and adventure, there must also be comedy. I'm not saying that all stories must have a funny idea at its center -- though many will. And I'm not saying that there must always be a sense of sun-blackening menace at the center, edged with comedy by way of the Ghostbusters' reaction to it -- though many will have that.

Ivan Reitman (director/producer of GHOSTBUSTERS) put it best: "My comedy has a very strong basis in reality -- which is not to say that that's the only kind of comedy worth doing. There are lots of very funy people who do comedy that has nothing whatsoever to do with reality . . . with broadly-drawn characters who do things in a very exaggerated manner. Generally, I will have a couple of characters in my films that are like that, mainly as leavening. But for the most part, the principals are very real guys who say funny things and are in funny situations. And they respond to those situations the way you or I would if we were anywhere near that witty."

What made the original GHOSTBUSTERS work was its blend of moods -- something scary to build up tension, and a joke to release the tension. As when, after his girlfriend has just been transformed (in an impressive display of special effects) into a snarling, frightning Terror Dog, Peter calmly looks around,

snarling, frightning Terror Dog, Peter calmly looks around, shrugs, and says, "Okay. So -- she's a dog."

It's that blend of visual action, visual humor, scary-stuff and jokes that will continue in THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS, and those who can provide that balance in their scripts will have no trouble finding work with us.

Class dismissed.

AFTERWORD

Dull Stuff

A few practical points about writing for GHOSTBUSTERS.

1) You must submit all written material on clean, clear typewritten pages, preferably written in Pica Courier type. We prefer originals, simply because they'll photocopy better than a second-generation copy. We ask all this, additionally, because all scripts will be put into the DIC Master Computer. If the script is properly typed, with the right typestyle, it can be simply scanned and loaded into the computer for later revision, if needed. If not, it'll have to be retyped -- and the drums they beat to keep the rhythm among the typists going, as on a slave-ship, are just so darned loud at times like those. Remember, we work right next to Word Processing, and have to put up with the moans, shrieks, and occasional thuds as bodies hit the floor.

2) If you can submit a script on floppy disk as well as on paper, we will love you forever. Kaypro format is preferred, but I believe others can be read as well. Check with me first.

3) The writing process will proceed as follows:

A) We meet. We discuss the show.

B) You go off and dwell on the error of your ways, check the balance of your checkbook, and decide to go through with it anyway.

C) You come up with spiffy story ideas.

D) You call one of us to briefly describe the kind of story you're contemplating, so we can warn you away from any areas we've already covered.

E) You do not come in to pitch the idea thereafter. We don't believe in pitching, and it doesn't believe in us. A pitch doesn't tell us if someone can write. Only writing does that. So you instead will write a 1 to 2 page premise, no more, just enough to give us an idea where the story will go. It should have a beginning, middle, and an end. You can give us one, two, or a trunkful of these premises. The resident elves will be happy to take whatever you have into their treasure-trove up on the hill.

F) We will examine your premises. Those we like, we will forward to Columbia Studios for approval. Depending upon whether they say yes, suggest changes, or say no, you will alternately be given the go-ahead to go to outline, be told to rethink the premise, or you will be terribly disappointed and think we're all a bunch of jerks. You wouldn't be the first, and by golly, we're pretty darned sure you won't be the last, either.

G) You will turn in your outline. It should be about 4 to 5 pages, beat-by-beat, or in detailed narrative, giving us a sense of the story, its development, and the humor. If we like it, we'll send it on to Columbia. For the list of possibilities thereafter, see F above.

H) Columbia approves the outline, we approve the outline, and you go to script. At this point, we're looking at a simple, two-act format. (And it's a pretty ugly sight, let me tell you.) We'd like to see scripts within two weeks of assignment, four weeks if a meteor hits your house. If you take longer than that, we will arrange for a meteor to hit your house.

I) We accept and approve the script, which may go through without changes (which we always like), or may require minimal changes to be made here, by us, or -- if necessary -- we may send it back to you for any larger changes. We have a deep respect for the written word, and for your right to have input to what happens to your script. However, if the script still isn't right by the second draft, we'll do what we have to.

J) The script is finalized. You may have a copy for your files. It will go into production.

K) When aired, you will receive individual credit on the script, not a gang credit. Further, as story editors we will only take credit on a script if we have to do a substantial amount of rewriting and restructuring.

That's it.

Good luck.

* * *

THE CHARACTERS

PETER VENKMAN - The opportunist and natural leader of the group. He's glib, outgoing, with a dry, sarcastic wit and a boyish charm that comes in handy when he needs to con someone -- be it a lady, a customer, even a ghost. Peter is a class clown with a Ph.D, a wise-guy, a practical joker and a party animal. He is a bit of a womanizer, too -- but we should play this aspect down. He's a guy who sees the humor in every situation, no matter how tense.

Pete Venkman's not all that wild about ghost busting. Truth is, ghosts scare the skin off of him, be it a class-5 full form vapor or a free floating apparition. But when the chips are down (as they so often are), he somehow rises to the occasion and, through a combination of luck, skill, and sheer audacity, pulls his group through the crisis. He is a very unscientific thinker, but incredibly, his crazy, off-the-wall schemes seem to work, to everyone's amazement except his own.

Pete is also somewhat of a slob. His hang-loose manners, casual clothing, flip language and disaster-area sleeping quarters would make Oscar Madison envious.

When the Ghostbusters are out on assignment, Pete likes to play the roll of head-honcho (especially if there are any ladies around), snapping out directions: "Ray, take the left. Egon, take the right. Winston, take the middle. I'll take a break."

Ultimately, Peter Venkman is a simple man with simple tastes: He simply wants to be a filthy rich, national hero.

RAY STANTZ - The idealist, sincere and totally dedicated to his cause as a Ghostbuster. A true ecto-scientist, Ray eagerly looks forward to every new assignment, tackling it with all the zeal of a school kid. He is an avid reader, an expert on paranormal phenomena, and can recite obscure supernatural facts the way a sports nut reels off baseball statistics. ("I remember reading about a class-6 psychic turbulence that converged at Coney Island on October 10, 1957..."). Of all the Ghostbusters, Ray is the one who finds the enterprise most thrilling. For him, catching ghosts is like being a kid in a candy store. Of course, every now and then a particularly mean-spirited spirit will scare the Wheaties right out of him...but he's never slowed down for long.

Though Ray doesn't have the the silver tongue of Pete, the electronic genius of Egon, or the common sense of Winston, he does have tons of enthusiasm. It was Ray who instantly fell in love with the dingy, dirty, deserted firehouse and convinced the others to buy it as their headquarters. And it was Ray who brought home the hopeless wreck of a hearse and converted it into their spiffy Ghostbusting vehicle. He's the group's "Mr. Fixit", an incurable optimist always able to find good in people, objects, or situations that seem totally without redemption. And sometimes he learns that he should have left well-enough alone.

EGON SPENGLER - The electronics genius who is also a preppy nerd. Very SERIOUS: VERY Ivy League. Prone to ties, sweaters and argyle socks. Seems detached from reality and lives in his own spacey dream-world. (His hobby is collecting spores, molds and fungi.) Very focused on his high-tech ghostbusting inventions, including the ecto-containment system and the spirit-tracking device which blinks and beeps like a Geiger counter. In fact, all of the group's equipment is a result of Egon's genius...and Ray Stantz's mechanical aptitude. Egon fixes nothing; he's strictly theoretical. A New Wave Spock.

Egon's approach to every problem, whether personal or ghostbusting, is strictly scientific. He doesn't really consider ghostbusting worthy of his lofty intellect, but he rather enjoys the notoriety it has brought him, (although he still wishes he could loosen up more around the ladies.) His basic attitude is stiff, formal, not unlike the Higgins character in "Magnum P.I."

WINSTON ZEDDMORE - The pragmatist who was originally hired help, but is now a full partner in the company. Winston is the common sense member of the group, the one who desperately tries to keep the whole whacko enterprise from getting completely out of hand. He frequently gets on Venkman's case about his sloppiness. And he's the guy who gets stuck going over the expense sheets late at night, the only buffer between the Ghostbusters and bankruptcy.

Winston's big weakness is that he's a soft touch, a defender of the downtrodden, the oppressed, the unfaired upon. He's constantly bringing home strays -- animal and human alike. Sometimes even ghosts. It was Winston who freed the greedy but good-hearted little ghoul, Slimer, from the laser containment system and trained him to be his pet.

When arguments ensue (and they always do) between Pete, Ray and Egon as to what super-sophisticated, ultra-scientific approach to use at a critical moment, Winston cuts through all the crap and comes up with a simple, obvious solution that the others wished they'd thought of.

SLIMER - A short, rotund ghoul...bright green, with a cavernous mouth, bald pate, bug-eyes, and no legs. Slimer travels everywhere by zipping through the air...clumsily. He's always colliding with things -- and people -- leaving a splotch of tell-tale, ectoplasmic slime from the impact.

After Winston released him from the containment system, Slimer became Winston's -- and the Ghostbusters' -- unofficial pet. A pesky pet. The netherworld's version of a frisky, overeager puppy. He's constantly getting under foot, raiding the 'fridge (he's a living garbage disposal,) pulling practical jokes, wanting the group to play with him, etc. He can't wait for the guys to get home from an assignment so he can gleefully assault them with big, slobbery licks that leave them all slimed up. They try to fend him off, but he's hard to discourage. Finally, one of the group will yell in frustration, "No, Slimer! DOWN!" Whereupon, the offended Slimer takes the order literally and disappears straight down through the floor with a big splot of slime. Then eerie, mournful whimpering emanates from beneath the floorboards, driving everyone nuts until they finally give in and coax Slimer back into view. Exuberant, he erupts through the floor, and resumes licking and sliming the guys up one side and down the other.

Winston trained Slimer as he would a dog. As a result, Slimer displays certain canine characteristics - though his bark is more like a belch. He can sit up, beg, roll over (all in mid-air), wag his "tail", fetch slippers, the morning paper, etc. But the problem is, all the objects he brings back are always covered with slime.

Slimer is an insatiable chow-hound; a living Cuisinart. He puts away enough groceries to feed the 7th Fleet, then looks around to see if there's anything he's missed. Shameless, he even resorts to trickery by stealing food right off the Ghostbusters' plates.

Slimer communicates with grunts, snorts and hiccups. He's like a mischievous little kid-monster who giggles and laughs a lot, and can pop up anywhere. But just because he's a ghost doesn't mean he's not afraid of certain things -- like bigger, badder ghosts or full-bore demons.

JANINE MELNITZ - The Ghostbusters' secretary, a small, bespectacled young woman whose pleasant features belie her shrill, nasal voice and thick, Brooklyn accent. Janine is a habitual gum-chewer and bubble-blower who tries to be polite and proper to the clients. Oh, how she tries. But her fuse is short -- real short -- and she always winds up losing her cool and letting it all hang out, New York cabbie-style. Janine may be petite, but she's a real tiger when she gets her dander up.

Despite her crusty attitude, she's actually fond of her four, nutty employers. After all, she's been with them from the start. But she doesn't patronize them or live in awe of their newfound fame. No way. To Janine, this is just another 9-to-5 job and, no matter how chaotic things around Ghostbusters Headquarters become, her main priorities are her coffee breaks, lunch hour and overtime.

Janine is especially attracted to the shy egghead, Egon. It's the old story of "opposites attract," but these two are so opposite that there is always some awkward foul-up coming between them.

THE CAR

ECTO 1 - The Ghostbusters' vehicle -- a vintage Cadillac hearse that has been customized and computerized, with an arsenal of laser weaponry mounted on the roof. Ecto-1 is not a character in the true sense of the word, meaning that it doesn't talk, fly, or travel underwater. But it does have character. Due to its age, it's temperamental and full of idiosyncrasies. The horn sticks at the worst times; parts drop off like autumn leaves; it wheezes and pings and groans, even going down hill; and when the job is done, Ecto-1 needs to be kicked, thumped or coddled before its motor will shut off. But, hey, nobody's perfect.

Ray Stantz is the guy who originally bought this rustbucket, to the dismay of his partners, and he's the guy who worked automotive miracles to get it into its present, shiny condition. Ecto-1 is Ray's baby; he understands its quirks better than anybody else, and it is he who almost lovingly does the maintenance and repairs. In return, Ecto-1 displays an eerie loyalty to Ray. When the going gets impossibly tough, it's Ray who usually coaxes that extra effort out of old Ecto-1 and saves the day.